ment of 'the hooks'. A thief condemned to this terrible sentence may well blench. He is dropped from a high wall or tower on to sharp hooks which project from the wall. With his limbs securely skewered, he is left hanging in the pitiless sun until the vultures end his misery, leaving a whitened skeleton as a warning to wantons. Influential prisoners are cast into the palace dungeons without light or food, and garrotted quietly in the night by their gaolers. Branding and flogging are also common forms of punishment in Arabia.

A fair amount of desert raiding is still carried on in the Jebel Shamailiyah district, the range of mountains between Oman and Muscat, and at Sinash, a lonely town in the hills, the *Wali*, or Sultan's Viceroy, has been obliged to use draconian means of dealing with brigands, who sometimes resort to ransom and are a menace to peaceful merchants who use the pass. Not long ago one of the Sultan's brothers was abducted and carried off into the hills. The ransom demanded—a heavy one—was paid, but a year later the ringleader and several of his men were caught by the Sultan's trackers. They suffered some unpleasant tortures before they were finally put out of their sufferings by being hanged. Their property was confiscated and their unfortunate relatives were obliged to pay several time the amount of the ransom. Crime does not pay in Arabia, unless you are on the winning side. Yet the bandit and the camel raider persist in their vocations in spite of all discouragement. The Arab is prepared to fight—to the death, if necessary, for that which he steals, and this is a spirit which all Arabs admire.

Young Arab boys and girls, as well as slaves and Persian servants, are sometimes carried off by the raiders, and at one time I was obliged to provide an armed guard for the Fort bearers, as they were terrified to return to Sharjah at night, a distance of one mile, unless accompanied. Haider, my personal bearer, a youth of fifteen, told me that he had once been attacked at night, and for a time I allowed him to sleep in one of the mess rooms. High prices are fetched in the slave market for young people, who are sold to merchants or pearling fleet owners and treated little better than negro slaves. A fifteen years old Persian boy may fetch as much as 2,000 rupees, and a girl about 1,500. Negroes fetch only half this amount. The British authorities are aware that a traffic in slaves is carried on in Oman, but claim that they have been unable to obtain any evidence of it. Since I have met slaves who complained to me that they had been abducted and sold in the market, and once

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

000 rarely away from the desert; he lives quite alone and does not invite the society of his fellow-countrymen, except when he is in Bahrain, where he is obliged to live the conventional social life. He habitually wears Arab dress, eats Arab food and sleeps in a tent. Although virtually unknown to the general public, this man, who exerts as much influence on the Arabs as Lawrence of Arabia ever did, is a personal friend of Bertram Thomas, and is a respected figure in Bahrain. Lermitte seldom visits Europeans in the Gulf and it was a great occasion, therefore, when he consented to dine with me at the Fort one evening. As he sat in my room after dinner, recounting fascinating tales of his experiences in the desert, I felt as near to hero-worship as I have ever been. Maharajahs, a Cabinet Minister, millionaires, major-generals, air chief marshals, peers and an ambassador have sat in that room, drinking my whisky and smoking my cheroots, yet to my mind they were mere nobodies compared with this grave, enigmatical little man who could travel a thousand miles over the desert, with thousands of pounds in his pockets, without being molested.

●674 609 On the way back to our launch, Bernard, an Indian traffic clerk who had accompanied us on the journey to Dubai, told me that a relative of his was murdered a few weeks ago. An Indian merchant of Dubai, he was lured into the desert sixty miles away, by a letter which asked him to visit an encampment of Bedouin tribesmen who wished to purchase several hundred sacks of flour. When he arrived at the encampment he was taken into a tent and stabbed in the back. He had foolishly brought several thousand rupees with him, and this was stolen. The crime was reported to the Political Officer, but no trace was ever found of the assailants. Bedouin treachery is not unknown and these tribesmen have been responsible for several murders of foreigners.

A few years ago a British official, Colonel Leachman, attended a conference of Arab chiefs. Agreement could not be reached on a certain point and one of the sheikhs began to abuse the British Government; Colonel Leachman momentarily lost his temper, and one of the sheikh's sons crept behind him and drove a dagger into his heart. This incident was described to me by Lermitte, who was a great friend of Leachman's. It is a lesson for all who would have dealings with the Arabs. Lermitte himself is always calm and good-humoured; he will sit with the Arabs in their tents for hours without speaking, and they say of him that he has 'an understanding silence'.